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AUTHOR Shireman, Joan F.; Johnson, Penny R.
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ABSTRACT

This is the second report in a longitudinal study designed to examine experiences of black children adopted by white couples, black couples and single parents. Begun in 1970, the study plan is to follow a cohort of black children, adopted as infants or toddlers, through their childhood years until the age of 20. The present report, based on descriptive and experimental data, examines the families when the children are 3 1/2 to 4 years old. Following the postulates of psychoanalytic theory, the study tests the hypotheses that black children raised by white parents would have problems forming racial identity and that black children raised by single parents would have problems forming sexual identity. Ninety-nine families comprising 27 single parents, 36 transracial and 36 traditional adoptive families were interviewed in person. Extensive telephone interviews were held with another 10 families who had moved out of Illinois. Data were obtained from three sources: (1) case records of the home study and the child's history prior to placement: (2) an assessment of family adjustment made shortly after placement: (3) interviews conducted in the home when the child was 3 1/2: and (4) a variety of tests. No evidence was found to substantiate the hypotheses. Descriptive components of the study focus on family interaction, roles, and ways of managing family life and crises, with particular emphasis on the single adoptive parent, as well as parental handling of adoption and perceived need for support groups or services. (Author/RH)

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ADOPTION: THREE ALTERNATIVES

A Comparative Study of Three Alternative Forms of Adoptive Placement

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Joan F. Shireman
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FOREWORD

The second reporting of Adoption: Three Alternatives comes at a time when most of the children in the study are three-and-one-half to four years old. With success in obtaining further sources of funding, we hope to follow these youngsters and their families for another twelve to sixteen years. As we have proceeded with the study it is apparent that the focus has broadened to encompass a look at family lifestyles and patterns in rearing children as well as the original and more directed focus of the children's handling of their identity--who they are--including racial and sexual identity. Given the general interest and concern today with the status of family life in America we hope that our study can also contribute insights into how families of different structures are faring in raising their children.

We remain indebted and grateful to the more than one hundred families who are continuing to participate in the study. Without their commitment we would not have progressed this far nor would we be hopeful of going further. Their contribution to the arena of adoption promises to be significant.

Raymond W. Fannings
Executive Director
Chicago Child Care Society

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this second reporting of Adoption: Three Alternatives we again express deep appreciation to the families participating in the project. The continuing interest of the families is critical and the enthusiasm they express for the study is rewarding for those of us involved. Their cooperation truly reflects a great commitment to children.

Agency staff persons also have contributed to the development and completion of the study. Agency administrators have offered support and assistance, specifically Raymond W. Fannings, Kenneth W. Watson and Marion P. Obenhaus. We are particularly grateful to the agency Board of Directors for their interest and support. The project has been greatly enriched through questions raised and suggestions offered by board as well as staff members.

Data collection was completed by the following interviewers: Dorothe Ernest, Beverly Kimble, Ellen Ryan Rest, Lois Thiessen Love, Peter Barnett, Gloria Burger and Steven O'Brien. Dorothe Ernest also conducted the telephone interviews. Judith Yoder assisted with data analysis and Ellen Rest with editing the report. Special recognition and thanks is due Rose Broder who typed, repeatedly, the final copy of this report.

To the many persons who have contributed to the study, we are indeed grateful.

Joan F. Shireman
Penny R. Johnson

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ADOPTION: THREE ALTERNATIVES

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THREE ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ADOPTIVE PLACEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Finding adoptive homes for black children has been a major thrust of adoptive agencies in recent years. Unable to find enough black couples to be parents to the numbers of children awaiting placement, agencies in the past ten to fifteen years particularly have sought alternative homes for black children. Adoption personnel began to consider families other than black, two-parent homes, the traditional placement. Single parents and white couples were thought to be additional placement resources, and recruitment of such families specifically for black children was launched.

This is the second report in a longitudinal study designed to examine experiences of black[1] children placed in traditional adoptive homes, transracial and single-parent homes. Begun in 1970, the study plan is to follow a cohort of black children, adopted as infants or toddlers, through their growing up years. Of families adopting black infants from Chicago Child Care

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[1] The term "black" is used for convenience in this article to refer to children with one white and one black parent, as well as to children with two black parents.

Society and Children's Home & Aid Society of Illinois between June 1970 and June 1972, a sample was selected so that the numbers of placements within each group--black couples, white couples, and single persons--are approximately equal. Comparisons among groups thus are facilitated. The first report, appearing in 1975, described the children and families prior to and immediately after placement (Shireman and Johnson, 1975). The present report examines the families when the children are three-and-one-half to four years old, capturing patterns of living in preschool years.

When the research study was undertaken, Chicago Child Care Society, a private multiservice child welfare agency had begun placing black infants with both white couples and single parents as well as with black couples. Considerable thought and careful movement into the initial placements had convinced adoption workers that these were good alternatives for children. But concern about potential problems prompted interest in a formal study of these homes. A long-term, follow-up study was designed to discover strengths and problems for children in such placements.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

A central developmental task for children in preschool years is the beginning formation of a positive and realistic identity--a sense of who they are and what their places in the worlds of their families (and to a limited extent a wider world) are to be. The central concern about rearing a black child in a white home is with formation of black racial identity; the central concern about rearing a child in a home with one parent is with formation of sexual identity. Study of these children during preschool years should show whether the basic "building blocks" of appropriate sexual and racial identity are being provided and used. Problems should be especially evident during this age when the child is openly struggling to develop a sense of self.

This report of the second research interview will focus on the child's discovery of self, while also providing descriptive information about patterns of living in these varied types of adoptive families. Subsequent reports as the children grow older will examine the children and their worlds at ages eight, twelve, sixteen, and twenty. Later reports will provide additional information on the suitability of these homes for the children.

BACKGROUND

In 1975, when the first report of the longitudinal study was presented, the central questions about appropriateness of placing infants with single parents, or with parents of another race, were around development of the child's self-identity. The ability of white parents to foster black identity in an adopted child and teach the skills to cope with racism have been questioned (Jones, 1972; Chestang, 1972), as has the ability of a single parent with a child's sexual identity (Kadushin, 1970). As practitioners became aware that in adulthood many adoptees seek their biologic parents, questions were also raised about an adoptive family's ability, whatever its composition, to help a child develop positive self-identity.

Evaluating the outcome of adoption, one facet of the "answer" to questions posed, has been undertaken by a number of investigators. By looking at various studies it was possible then to trace the adjustment of an adoptive child growing up with two parents of his own race through early years (Fairweather, 1952; Lynch, 1955), middle childhood (Ripple, 1968; Witmer, 1963; Lawder, 1971) and young adult years (Elonen, 1969; Fanshel, 1970; McWhinnie, 1967). All studies showed that an average of 17 percent of the adoptees had some problems in adjustment, varingly defined (Kadushin, 1974, p. 570), but none focused specifically on questions of identity. A few studies contained small sub-samples of black parents; findings for this group did not differ substantively.

Research on the black adoptive family has concentrated on ways in which numbers of applicants might be increased. Attitudes of black families toward adoption have been studied (Fowler, 1966, for example) and many reports of innovative recruitment programs have been made (Madison, 1973). Only one study focused on characteristics of black families who do adopt, and on the experiences of families after adoption (Lawder, 1971). Literature on the single-parent family was sparse and dealt with families in which one parent was absent for some circumstantial reason.

In the past five years, a body of literature on transracial adoption has begun to develop. Several studies have been completed which begin to provide some answers, however tentative, to at least some aspects of these questions. Despite a great increase in numbers of single-parent families, and a corresponding development of literature on the problems and successes of single mothers and fathers, there is still very little written about single-parent adoptions.

TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

Transracial adoption began in an era when homes were needed for black and other minority race children, many of whom were growing up in foster homes. It was justified pragmatically as a way of obtaining a permanent home for these children, and idealistically as an expression of commitment to the racial integration of society. Today the feasibility (or desirability) of any simplistic idea of "integration" has been challenged by the black community, and the ability of black children to develop appropriate racial identity in white homes has been questioned (National Association of Black Social Workers, 1972; Chimenzie, 1975, 1977; Chestang, 1972; Howard, 1977).

In 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers passed a resolution articulating the objections of its members to transracial adoption. An excerpt states:

> . . . Black children should be placed only with Black families, whether in foster care or for adoption. Black children belong physically, psychologically and culturally in Black families in order that they receive the total sense of themselves . . . Human beings are products of their environment and develop their sense of values, attitudes, and self concept within their family structures (National Association of Black Social Workers Conference, 1972).

The position statement continues by stating that in order to have the "background knowledge which is necessary to survive in a racist society" the black child must be reared in a black home.

Expanding the concept of a basic black identity, developed in interaction with other blacks, Chimenzie wrote:

> . . . given the condition of blacks and the strained relation between blacks and whites in this society, a white home is inappropriate for rearing a black child and detrimental to the development of certain indispensable characteristics. Such characteristics include ethnic awareness, identification with "blackness," and possession of survival strategies in a racially hostile environment (Chimenzie, 1977, p. 75).

The white parent cannot transmit these characteristics, he wrote in an earlier article, "because they are not black, because they probably tend to play down the harshness and inhumanity of oppressive racism, and because they live in a white neighborhood" (Chimenzie, 1975, p. 298). It seems probable that at least part of this proposition might be empirically tested.

The concept of "core identity" formed in early years primarily through interaction with parents, has been isolated (Erikson, 1963). Achieving positive self-identity should be possible for a child in any home where the parents are loving, and in their interaction affirm his sense of self-worth. Black identity can be viewed as an extension of this core identity, or it can be viewed as an integral part of the core. Components of black identity seem in early childhood to be recognition of racial differences and identification of oneself as black.

Whether the special attributes and values of "blackness" can be learned abstractly, or whether they must be experienced through interaction with blacks, is at issue. Writers agree that as much exposure as possible to black children and adults is desirable.

The final need of the black child, the possession of "survival strategies," seems somewhat apart from the central concept of identity. There seems no question, however, that to a greater or lesser degree (depending on the degree of racism present in the world of the transracially adopted child and young adult) these "survival strategies" are necessary and can only be learned through interaction with black persons. Whether white parents can be aware of racism, and whether they can enable the child to have continuing and meaningful contacts with blacks, can be evaluated.

Characteristics of families who adopt transracially

Early curiosity about those who "pioneered" in creating racially mixed families led to a number of studies examining characteristics of such families. There is uniformity in the findings. In reports since 1960, the "typical" white family adopting a child of another race tends to have high educational and occupational status, and economic success. The mother usually remains at home, though some work part time. Most have several young children. The families tend to be distant socially and/or geographically from relatives and have an independent or individualistic life style (Falk, 1970; Fanshel, 1972; Grow, 1974; Ladner, 1977; Pepper, 1966; Shireman, 1975; Zastrow, 1977).

The attitudes of white parents toward the race of their black adopted children have been explored extensively in more recent studies. Early difficulty in relating to a child of another race has been identified (Suzuki, 1965; Zastrow, 1977), but the difficulty is resolved quickly. Though the percentage is uncertain, it is clear that some proportion of transracially adopting parents attempt to deny racial differences in some manner. In the quest for identity as a member of the "human" race, in identification with a social or ethnic subgroup, or in emphasis on being a "family," racial differences can be denied (Suzuki, 1965, pp. 5-6; Ladner, 1977, pp. 135-43). Grow (1974, p. 53) reported that a small percentage did not even intend to tell the children of thei. racial backgrounds. Most mothers responding to a racial attitudes questionnaire saw the child's pride in a black heritage as important, but more than 10 percent were uncomfortable discussing race. Use of books (85 percent) and trips to museums or cultural events (29 percent) were the most common means of attempting to foster racial pride (Grow and Shapiro, 1974, pp. 54-60). Simon reported that parents responded with ambivalence when questioned about their wishes for the child's choice of racial identity (Simon, 1977, p. 100).

According to theorists on identity formation, daily interaction with black children and adults is more important than these "abstract" experiences of blackness. In a sample drawn nationally it was found that families tend to live in white neighborhoods; 45 percent of the families in this group described their neighborhoods as totally white and another 45 percent as predominantly white (Grow, 1974, p. 45). This finding is confirmed in other studies.

Neighborhoods tend to be middle class. Schools attended are predominantly white (Grow, 1974, p. 29), though many parents attempted to find nursery schools with black children and black teachers (Ladner, 1977). Sixty per-

cent of the families had black friends with reciprocal visiting between homes (Grow, 1974, p. 53); nonetheless all studies reported that these are rather "self contained" families with relatively little opportunity for the majority of their adopted children to have sustained contact with other black persons.

Despite the fact that the children were adopted into predominantly white communities, the reactions of friends, neighbors and strangers in the community was generally reported to be positive or indifferent. Parents reported occasional hostile encounters, as well as concern about encounters with overly-enthusiastic strangers. White strangers were generally more hostile than blacks (Zastrow, 1977, pp. 43-44; Ladner, 1977, ch. 11).

Other children in the neighborhood were reported to be accepting of the adopted child (Zastrow, 1977, p. 440). Reports differed, however, on the extent to which children experienced cruel remarks, name-calling, and other forms of abuse. In an extensive analysis of parental perception of cruelty to their children, Grow found that cruelty was more often reported by parents more aware of and sensitive to racial issues, by parents of children with dark complexions, and by parents living in small towns with small non-white populations. Despite these experiences, the children were reported to have good relationships with other children (Grow, 1974, pp. 177-79, 193-99, and 210-11).

Outcome for the child

Review of follow-up studies on transracial adoption leave little question that in general parents have provided love, nurture, and support to their children (Fanshel, 1972; Grow, 1974; Ladner, 1977; Simon, 1977; Zastrow, 1977). Families report that the adoption has been a satisfying experience; the children have been enjoyed and family life enriched.

To date only Grow's study has attempted a more formal assessment of outcome, using a series of fifteen measures from varying sources, including teachers' assessments and children's test scores. A 77 percent "success rate" was reported which is similar to that of other follow-up studies of adoption (Grow, 1974, ch. 4). Children whose parents perceived them as "obviously black" tended to have better adjustment scores. The parent's perception, not the child's appearance, was the important factor (Grow, 1974, pp. 109-13). Children in larger families also had better adjustments.

Only in the Simon study were children asked directly about their perceptions of themselves and their blackness. Using various test situations to

measure racial attitudes and identity, Simon found that a smaller proportion of black children in white homes manifested a white racial preference than was found in prior work with the same age child (Simon, 1977, pp. 133-62). These findings are encouraging evidence that in early, crucial years trans-racially adopted children are beginning to form a positive black identity.

SINGLE-PARENT ADOPTION

Placing children with single persons is another form of adoption fraught with uncertainty and controversy in recent years. Begun as recently as 1965 and used sparingly, as yet little formal study of single-parent adoptions has occurred. It is generally agreed that single-parent adoptions are appropriate only when a two-parent home is not available for a particular child.

Characteristics of single-parent families

In recent years the number of single-parent families in the United States has increased dramatically. In 1974, 10 million American children lived with only one parent (one out of six children under eighteen), with mothers heading about 90 percent of these homes. It has been predicted that two out of five children born in the 1970s will live for some period of childhood with only one parent (America's Children, 1976, pp. 59-60). This change in family life style has given rise to a growing body of literature about the characteristics of single-parent families.

There is some evidence that single mothers may have difficulty with instrumental (provider) roles, and single fathers with nurturing roles. Because women working full time average only 60 percent of the wages earned by men, poverty can be a major problem for the single mother. In 1975 the median income of working women heading families was $6,575; thus more than half had incomes less than the poverty standard of $7,500 for that year (America's Children, 1976, pp. 16, 65). Single fathers on the other hand apparently have relatively adequate incomes, but experience some stress in "managing" daily routines (Levine, 1976). Once the period of adapting to single-parent status is over, most single parents seem to feel competent and satisfied with their lives. In a thoughtful and extensive review of the litera-

ture on single families, Kadushin (1970, pp. 269-70) concluded that there is no relationship between the single-parent home and emotional pathology, and only a tenuous association between growing up in a single-parent home and becoming delinquent.

The psychosocial developmental theories of Freud and Erikson stress the need of the child for an affectively charged and continuous relationship with adults of both sexes if proper identity formation is to take place. Particular concern is evidenced in the literature about boys in fatherless homes. Kadushin, after reviewing the literature, concluded, "The research presents an ambiguous answer suggesting, however, that many children in father-absent families do establish an appropriate sex-typed, conflict-free identification" (1970, p. 270). Though there is no evidence that in single-parent homes children are having difficulty, there is some interesting new material indicating that fathers are uncomfortable rearing adolescent daughters (Mendes, 1976, p. 443) and lesbian mothers uncomfortable with boys (Hall, 1978, p. 384).

Few studies of single-parent adoptions have been done. In 1969 the Los Angeles County Adoption Department reviewed the 36 placements made to that point to find out what kinds of people had become single parents.

> They seem to share many of the characteristics and life-styles of couples who adopt across racial lines . . . "people with a relatively high level of emotional maturity, high capacity for frustration tolerance, and an ability to pursue a relatively independent course in life without being overly influenced about what other people think" (Branham, 1970, p. 104).

Other studies have tended to corroborate these findings (Shireman, 1976; Levine, 1976; Dougherty, 1978). Other reviewers have noted the child-oriented quality of single applicants and their enjoyment of mothering in the children's very young years (Jordan, 1966; Shireman, 1976).

Outcome of single-parent adoptions

Follow-up studies of single-parent adoptions are rare; only two have been published. These are interesting because of differences in samples and similarity of findings. In 1976 Shireman and Johnson reported the outcome for a group of women (a portion of the sample for this study), predominately black, who adopted from two agencies in Chicago. In 1978 Dougherty

reported a study based on a sample of 82 women, predominately white, obtained principally through a national organization, the Single Adoptive Parents Committee. This study used a mailed questionnaire and children ranged in age from one to twenty-four years.

The two studies agree in finding "these mothers have achieved a high level of personal maturity and have reached a stage of life at which they are willing and eager to accept responsibility for a child" (Dougherty, 1978, p. 314). Many of the parents in both studies were women of high achievement who had demonstrated success and stability in their careers. Few difficulties were reported for the majority of families in the 1976 study. Indeed, some were thought to be exceptionally strong. However, a high proportion of the black women in the sample had very modest jobs, and low income was a problem. In the 1978 study few problems were discovered, and parents evidenced little need for institutionalized support systems (Dougherty, 1978, p. 313).

Thus knowledge of single-parent adoption remains scanty. Generally, the parents are mature individuals, motivated by a wish to care for a child. From the literature on single parents and the literature on adoptions it is possible to hypothesize that major difficulties will lie in (1) carrying out of instrumental roles, (2) balancing the demands of work and family life, and (3) providing identity figures of the opposite sex. The major "outside" variables affecting the functioning of the single-parent family would seem to be the income level and the personal support system the parent is able to develop. But there is yet much to be learned about these adoptions.

THE PROBLEM FOR STUDY AND THE STUDY DESIGN

Great variation is evident in knowledge about the three types of adoption which form this study sample. Older literature about "traditional" adoption can probably be applied to the black couples who adopted, but this literature does not deal with the way in which the child resolves the complex question of "Who am I?" A recent body of literature has begun to describe the family adopting transracially, and the early adjustment of the

child. Little study has been made of single-parent adoptions, though there is extensive material on the single-parent family.

Questions currently being asked about adoption itself center about the manner in which, in the absence of biologic parents, the child attains a sense of self. Aspects of this issue are formation of appropriate racial identity for the black child adopted by white parents and formation of appropriate sexual identity for the child adopted by a single parent. Since this second report of the longitudinal study is being made as the children reach age four--a time when coping with identity-formation is a basic developmental task--the focus of this report is on these issues.

Hypotheses and questions

The major hypothesis of the study, that black children adopted by single parents or by white couples will have more difficulty with certain identity formation tasks than those adopted traditionally by black couples, has been tested by comparing the three groups of adoptive families. Specifically:

(1) Black racial identity--awareness of race, preference for the black race, and sense of self as black--will be more difficult for the transracially adopted child to achieve than for the child in a traditional adoptive home. Identity is in preschool years largely based on interaction with parents. Thus racial identity will be expected to be more easily formed to the extent that:

   (a) parents provide love, nurture, and support,

   (b) parents recognize, accept, and value the child's racial heritage,

   (c) parents recognize instances of racism and help the child develop appropriate coping skills, and

   (d) parents provide interaction with black children and adults.

(2) Sexual identity--awareness of and acceptance of one's own sex--will be more difficult for the child in the single-parent home than in a home with two parents. In preschool years sexual identity is also largely based on interaction with parent and close companions. Thus sexual identity will be more easily formed to the extent that:

   (a) the parent provides love, nurture, and support,

(b) the parent is able to achieve a balance of work and family life which is satisfactory to him/her,

(c) the parent values the child's sex, and

(d) the parent provides interaction with persons of the opposite sex.

In addition to testing the above hypotheses, the study has a major descriptive component:

(1) Description of family interaction, roles, and ways of managing family life and crises, with a particular emphasis on the single adoptive parent about whom least is known.

(2) Description of parental handling of adoption and perceived need for support groups or services.

The sample

The sample was selected from adoptive placements made by two private child welfare agencies--Chicago Child Care Society and Children's Home & Aid Society of Illinois--between June 1970 and June 1972. In order to facilitate comparisons, three samples of approximately equal size were selected. All placements of black youngsters with single parents were included (31 placements), as were about half the transracial placements of black children (42 placements), and about one-third of the placements with black couples (45 placements).

Home-study procedures were similar at the two agencies. Families expressed initial interest in adoption by telephone and then were interviewed by an adoption intake worker. Following intake, they were seen for a series of interviews with the caseworker assigned to complete the adoption study and place the child. The median length of the study and placement process was from three to six months. Most applicants were seen for three to five interviews. Families were told of the research during the home-study process. All expressed interest in the project and willingness to cooperate.

For most families in the sample, placing a child in their home was handled in a straightforward and expeditious manner. After the home-study was completed, the adoption worker selected a child who "matched" the pref-

erences of the adopting parents.[1] After the home was approved the median length of wait for placement was less than one month. When a child had been located, the parents came to the agency where they learned about the child and his background, and were able to ask questions. If the child was an infant or young toddler (as most were) the parents had a chance to get acquainted with him in the agency, as they accompanied him through a pediatric examination before taking him home. The placement period was sometimes extended by one or two visits for an older child, in order to give the child a chance to become comfortable with his new family.

About one month after placement, the research interviewer contacted the adoptive parents to schedule an appointment. The interviewer went to the family's home and talked with the mother or with both parents, if the father was able to be there (fathers were present in about one-quarter of the interviews). In all but one or two instances the interviewers had a chance to observe and interact with the child. Parents were cooperative and interested in the study; interviewers felt they talked freely. Many families expressed enthusiasm; only seven refused to participate in the study.

The major objective of the first interview was to acquaint the family with the longitudinal research study, answer their questions, and enlist their cooperation. In addition, interviewers gathered data on the early adjustment of the new adoptive family. It was recognized that patterns of parent-child interaction would not have stabilized in such a short time so that specific associations between parenting capacity and child development could not be made. However, descriptions of early adjustment patterns provided some indicators, if only speculative in nature, of strengths in the home.

In the three-and-one-half years between the first and second interviews research staff maintained contact with the families through Christmas cards and a yearly mid-summer newsletter. A change of address card was enclosed with each mailing. Cooperation was good and interest frequently expressed.

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[1] Two families in this group were part of a demonstration project at CCCS in which applicants took greater responsibility for the timing of the study and the selection of the child. This project is reported by Joan Shireman and Kenneth Watson, "Adoption of Real Children," in Social Work 17, no. 4 (July 1972): 29-38.

The data reported here include information from 99 families with whom in-person interviews were conducted.[1] All but seven of the interviews were held in the families' homes.[2]

Nine families who participated in the first interview shortly after placement were not interviewed a second time. Contact was lost with three families--two single parents and one black couple. The other six families (one single parent and five black couples) did not wish to participate in a second interview, although four asked to be called at the point when the third interview was due, indicating they might consider continuing then. Another family who refused to be interviewed wanted to remain on the mailing list.

Ninety-nine families were interviewed in person--27 single parents, 36 transracial and 36 traditional adoptive families. In almost all instances both parents and children were seen.[3] Two white couples agreed to the interview but did not want their children to participate.

Data sources and measurement

Data were obtained from three sources:

(1) Case records of the home study and the child's history prior to placement were analyzed. This material was supplemented by an interview with the caseworker.

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1 In addition to the in-person interviews, ten families who had moved out of the Chicago area were interviewed by telephone. The data from these interviews will be reported separately.

2 Three of the seven families had moved out of the Chicago area and were seen either in the agency (one family) or in the homes of grandparents (two families) during a return visit to Chicago. Three other families were seen in the agency upon the request of the parents, one because they did not want the children to be involved in the interview. The remaining family was seen in the home of the babysitter.

3 Efforts to see both parents, when appropriate, were successful. Interviews frequently were held in evenings or on weekends to accomodate the parents' working schedules.

The dimensions along which these families are described were developed in conjunction with adoption workers at the two participating agencies and reflect workers' central concerns. The core of the material is an assessment of the family's capacity to form close relationships and to handle stress. These concepts are measured through several items.

Independent judgments were made by a second case reader in 14 percent of the sample; judges agreed 75 percent of the time.

(2) An assessment of early family adjustment was made by a research interviewer after talking with the parent (or sometimes both parents) in the family home shortly after placement. Almost always the interviewer saw the child as well. Independent judgments were made by a second research analyst who listened to tapes for 14 percent of the sample. Agreement on the full scale of ratings (five points) was attained only 67 percent of the time; many items are collapsed in reporting to improve reliability.

(3) When the child was three-and-one-half, two research interviewers made a second assessment in the family home. First both interviewers talked with the whole family; then one interviewer spoke with the parents while the other saw the child. A pair of research analysts made independent judgments after listening to tapes of these interviews. For 15 percent of the interviews, there was agreement 77 percent of the time.[1]

In addition to interviewer judgments made after an interview, data with respect to the children were based on a variety of other tests. Descriptions of the tests can be found in the section in which they are reported.

Measurement of identity in the young child is a complex problem. The core of positive self-identity is reflected in those activities and attitudes of the child commonly called "overall adjustment." It is possible with a variety of instruments to ascertain whether a three- or four-year-old is aware of racial differences, whether he has racial preferences and what they are, and how he identifies himself. These elements seem to tap many of the major dimensions identified by writers on black identity. Sexual identity was more difficult to measure through instruments, in part because this is a time of shifting roles and expectations. It was possible to measure sexual preference

[1] See the Appendix for further reliability data.

and identification with sex-role as portrayed by the parent, but probably only serious problems were identified.

This report of the second phase in the longitudinal study thus offers a description of family life, and examines the children's beginning identity formation, and families' handling of the issue of adoption.

THE ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

To understand the life and adjustment of these adopted children one must begin with a picture of their families--role structure, ways of earning a living, patterns of handling change and crisis, and relationships with neighborhood and community. More specific information will be drawn in and presented as it illustrates particular aspects of the children's adjustments or adoption experiences. Detailed background information, presented in the report of the first interview, is not repeated here. Following, then, is a description of "family structure" as the children approach age four.

Family composition

Differences in the household composition of the three groups of families are interesting. Only 70 percent (nineteen families) of the single-parent families were headed by the parent alone; the other eight families included grandparents or other adult relatives or friends. In contrast, all of the transracial families were headed by the parents alone, and in only one of these families did another adult live in the home--an African student. Among the traditional families, three included grandparents, aunts, uncles, and one had a housekeeper; the other traditional families included only parents and children. Two of the single mothers have married in the past four years, and two of the traditional families have divorced.[1]

[1] Since these changes took place relatively late in the four year span, these families are considered as part of their original groups for this data analysis.

The transracial families tended to have more children than the others. All but one had more than one child, and two families had seven children; the median number of children was three. Seventeen had other adopted children (one had five adopted children), and one family had a foster child in the home. Single-parent families had the fewest children, with nineteen (70 percent) having only one child; the other eight each had two children. In the latter group two of the second children are biologic, one is a foster child, another is a nephew, and four are adopted. The traditional adoptive families were also small; nineteen had only one child, twelve had two, and five had three children. Almost three-fourths of these children were adopted.

Occupation and Income

As might be expected, single-parent families had the lowest incomes, though the range of incomes within the group is great. These families were living, for the most part, on the income produced through full time work of the single parent. Of the nineteen single-parent families for whom income data were obtained, five families were earning less than $8,000 per year, while two had incomes over $25,000; the median income was $12,500. Occupations varied: teachers, nurses, sales clerks, secretaries, nurses' aides, and assembly line workers were represented.

The black couples showed a similar pattern of high employment. Twenty-seven of the wives were employed mainly in professional, technical or clerical positions; two of these were the sole support of the families. In only nine families was the husband the sole breadwinner. In twenty-two families both husband and wife worked full time. Thirteen of the men were in professional/technical positions; eight were skilled workmen with the remainder filling diverse positions. Given the high employment rate within the group, it is not surprising that incomes were high. There were no families living on less than $8,000, and almost one-quarter earned over $30,000 a year; the median income was $21,000.

The white couples presented a similar income picture, but a markedly different employment pattern. Over half the men were in professional or technical positions, and another quarter were in managerial positions. In 78 percent of the families the incomes represented the full time work of the husband only; only five wives worked full time. (It must be remembered that these are large families of young children.) Incomes ranged from $8,000 to over $30,000; the median income was $20,000.

Housing

Families lived throughout the Chicago metropolitan area, with a large proportion living in suburban areas. Most families owned their own homes (78 percent of the single parents, 80 percent of the white couples, and 76 percent of the black couples).

Residential neighborhoods tended to be racially homogeneous for approximately two-thirds of all family groups. Black parents live in black neighborhoods and white parents in white neighborhoods. The remainder lived in racially mixed neighborhoods, with white, black, Hispanic, and Oriental families represented.

The present is an age of high mobility, and generally the families in the study were not exceptional in this respect. Since the first interview, twenty-six transracial families (72 percent) have moved, four families twice and another four at least three times. Eleven single parents (41 percent) have moved; two of these have moved twice. In contrast, the black couples have had the most stable living arrangements. Only nine (25 percent) have moved, and for all but one of these it has been only once.

Changes

In addition to moves, many families have experienced other changes in the past four years. Perhaps most momentous was the addition of family members through birth and adoption; fifteen children were born and twelve children adopted. About one-quarter of the families experienced job changes, while another nineteen persons (mainly women) returned to work or school, commonly after taking a leave of absence when their children were placed. Another eighteen families had changes in household composition as a result of relatives moving into or out of their homes. Of interest is that changes are commonplace, dictated, perhaps, by the fact that this is a group of young, growing families still striving to reach career and income potentials. In general, changes were not disruptive for the families.

Crises

Over half of the families have experienced personal crises during this four year span. Most common was hospitalization of a family member (14 percent) or the death of a relative (18 percent). Greatest variability was found within the group of single parents with fourteen families (52 percent) having

no crises, while seven families (26 percent) had multiple crises. However, it was not the crisis itself, but the difficulty in coping with the crisis, which was of primary interest. When asked to describe the crises, about 38 percent of the families (two-thirds of those who had experienced crises) described coping with one or more of the crises as being "difficult." Usually only one crisis was so described, and commonly it was serious illness or death. No appreciable differences were found among the three groups in reported capacity to cope with crisis.

Child care patterns

With a high proportion of working mothers among the single-parent and traditional adoptive families, care by others besides parents became an important part of daily life for many children. More than half of the traditional adoptive families and two-thirds of the single-parent families used a full day of school (day care) as their basic child care plan, while 40 percent of the transracial families sent their children to nursery school for a half day. Eighteen children (twelve of them transracially adopted) needed no regular child care plan, and fourteen were cared for by relatives or baby-sitters. Aside from the greater use of half-day rather than full-day schools by the transracial families (where many mothers were not working out of the home), patterns of child care differed little among the three groups, with most children having some daily group experience.

Parents and interviewers assessed the adequacy of the child care plans described by the parents. Both mothers and fathers tended to see plans as more adequate than did the interviewers, with mothers being more critical than fathers. According to interviewer evaluations, fewer transracial families used child care plans of moderate to low adequacy (about one-quarter, while about half of the other plans were so assessed), but it must be remembered that with more mothers at home, these families had more options. Only one child (in a traditional adoptive family) was thought to be receiving poor child care. In the past, nine children, from both traditional and single-parent homes, had received poor care for a period of time.

About half of the children in nursery school began between ages two-and-one-half and three years, a somewhat younger age than is usually considered optimal. Three children of single parents entered day care under two-and-one-half years of age. The need of the mothers to work was apparently not the sole reason for children starting school so young; apart from the single parents, half of those who began school under three years of age had mothers at home. Of the children in school, only seven were reported as having

difficulty separating from their families; two of these children had started school under three years of age.

Though patterns of child care look similar for all three groups, it is interesting to note that when all forms of care are considered (not just school) the percentage of children having negative reactions to separation from their mothers was greater among the single-parent families (24 percent) than among the two-parent families (11 percent). It is tempting to speculate that this indicates that single parents form closer ties with their children. However, of these six children of single parents, three were placed in adoption at over nine months and had experienced multiple placements and/or poor care prior to adoptive placement, one started school at under eighteen months, and the fifth had been separated from her mother for over three months when a relative was seriously ill. The multiplicity of interacting variables makes interpretation difficult.

The family and the community

Though numbers, and differences, are small, patterns of involvement with friends and community were found to be somewhat different among the three groups. Fathers from transracial families tended to be more active in community affairs than other fathers with all but seven reporting such involvement, while a higher proportion (about three-quarters) of traditional and single-parent families were involved with church affairs. About one-quarter of all mothers had few contacts beyond immediate family. This apparent isolation may be most serious for those mothers who were not working outside the home. A balance may have been struck, however, as about three-quarters of the mothers in transracial families were involved in activities outside the home more than once a month, as were only about half the other mothers.

Perhaps of most concern is the discovery that almost one-third of the single mothers had no meaningful friendships, either being quite alone or having contacts limited to relatives. This may be a reflection of some difficulty in forming relationships or may be simply a statement that a woman who carries full responsibility for a job, household, and children has little left-over time or energy.

In general, during the children's preschool years, transracial families have not experienced problems with neighborhood or community acceptance of their new mixed families. It is notable that a number of families have

moved since the adoption from ethnically mixed city neighborhoods to predominantly white suburban neighborhoods, yet only three families reported serious problems with neighbors. Single parents reported enthusiastic acceptance of the adoption by friends and neighbors with only an occasional employer raising questions.

Family patterns

Routine family activities--division of responsibility, decision making patterns, child care, discipline, planning--as described by family members provided a picture of daily life. In general, the patterns do not differ from those common to most families.

Examining the division of family responsibilities revealed that transracial families were most traditional in role assignment, with 80 percent giving the "breadwinner" role to the father and major responsibility for child care and home management to the mother. Thirty percent of the traditional adoptive families divided breadwinner and homemaker roles equally between the two parents, while over half followed the more traditional model, assigning major homemaker responsibilities to the mother even when she was working. One family in the sample from the transracial adoption group had completely reversed the usual male-female roles.

If the transracially adopting families were most traditional in role assignment, they were also the most flexible in shifting roles in times of stress or when schedules were unusually full. Roles were quite clearly defined among more than two-thirds of the families in all groups. Patterns of decision making and planning did not differ much between traditional and transracial adoptive families. In about three-quarters of the families, the mother had the primary responsibility for care of the children, with the father's involvement in parenting judged to be high in 75 percent of the transracial families and 69 percent of the traditional adoptive families. In six traditional families the father's involvement in parenting was judged to be low; unfortunately, in five of these the mother was also uninvolved; in two transracial families the presence of an uninvolved father was "balanced" by a highly involved mother.

THE CHILDREN PLACED

Most of the adopted children were between three-and-one-half and four-and-one-half years old at the time of the second interview, though seventeen were slightly younger and eighteen slightly older. Of the twenty-seven children adopted by single parents only eight were boys (three of these were adopted by men); among the two-parent families the adopted children were equally divided by sex. All the children were of black or black-white ancestry.

At the time of placement the children were, for the most part, very young and very healthy. Good family histories and good care prior to adoption were common. The youngest children were placed with black couples, 78 percent of whom received an infant less than two months old. Children placed with single parents tended to be slightly older; eight of them (nearly 33 percent) were at least nine months old. Children adopted when older tended to have made more than one foster care placement; four children had as many as three placements before going into adoption.

Health

In general, families in this sample have been blessed with healthy children --75 percent of the traditional adoptive parents, 61 percent of the transracial parents, and 67 percent of the single parents reported that their children have had no serious health problems. For those children who have been sick, respiratory illnesses, some quite serious, have been the most common problems. Twenty-two children have been hospitalized--eight from single-parent families, seven from transracial families, and seven from traditional adoptive families. Five children had more than one hospitalization, two with a nightmarish sequence of repeated hospitalizations for life-threatening respiratory problems. Overall, however, the health problems of children in this sample were similar to those of most young children.

While hospitalizations tended to last for a short period of time (most were hospitalized for less than a week), most of these children exhibited a strong, negative response. This was observed regardless of parent presence during the child's hospitalization. Despite the obvious frightening nature of hospitalization for very young children, only two parents thought their children suffered residual effects.

A few of the children were reported to have handicaps, most of them minor. Only nine children needed some regular medical attention as a result of their handicaps. Four children wore orthopedic shoes for correction of foot or leg deformities, for example flat feet and twisted knees. Another child limped as a result of a broken leg which did not heal properly. Two children had visual problems requiring correction. Another child had a speech defect, and another had cerebral palsy, which was diagnosed at age two. Only one or two children experienced any prohibition of activities or disturbances in development due to handicaps.

Measurement of adjustment

At the conclusion of each interview, the research interviewer seeing the child assessed his adjustment in twenty areas identified as important in child development literature. These ratings were later summed into descriptions of (1) excellent or good adjustment, (2) some difficulty: manifestations or scattered minor problems or a single serious problem, and (3) serious difficulty: multiple problems evidenced. Because a number of interviewers were used during this phase of the study, there was concern about the consistency with which this important assessment was made. Therefore, after all data were collected, a single coder, a social worker with extensive clinical experience, read the interview schedules and independently coded the child's adjustment, using the categories described above. Reliability was high; interviewer and coder agreed in 76.4 percent of the traditional adoptive cases, 88.9 percent of the single-parent adoptive cases, and 82.9 percent of the transracial adoptive cases. When disagreements were found, the coder tended to see more problems than the interviewer. As it is the coder's assessment which is generally used in measures of adjustment, problems and difficulties are fully represented.

The coder identified sixteen children, currently displaying no symptomatic behavior, as children for whom difficulty in the future was anticipated. This assessment was based on presence of one or more of the following factors: (1) early history of multiple placements, (2) severe symptoms of disturbance at the time of adoptive placement, (3) the presence of current

problems in character development coupled with family problems, and (4) parental discomfort with the adoption itself. These are children for whom theory would predict problems as they grow up. Though they were not classified as having problems in this analysis (because they displayed none), they will be carefully followed in future contacts.

Through use of standardized instruments, an attempt was made also to identify any child who was developing in a manner grossly different from the "normal" child. The Vineland Social Maturity Scale,[1] an instrument which assesses major elements of the child's functioning through careful questioning of parents, was also used in the first interview with families. In the present research interview the Preschool Attainment Record (PAR),[2] an expanded form of the Vineland developed for this age group, was also used. The PAR has subscores through which physical, social, intellectual and communication skills can be assessed. A different perspective on intellectual and communication skills was attained through the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test,[3] in which the child points to a picture of the proper object to indicate words known.

Adjustment and type of adoption

Interviewers reported overall that 70 percent of the children had excellent or good adjustment; the coder saw no current problem in 64 percent of the children. Both coded approximately 20 percent as having some problems. The interviewers judged that 10 percent of the children had serious difficulties, the coder 13 percent. Thus a slightly higher proportion of children in the present study were judged to be doing well or to have minor problems than are commonly found in adoption studies to date (Kadushin, 1974, p. 570).

The good adjustment factor was not, however, evenly distributed among the three types of adoptive families. As is shown in Table 1, only thirteen

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1 Edgar A. Doll, Vineland Social Maturity Scale (Circle Pines, Minn.: American Guidance Service, Inc., 1947).

2 Edgar A. Doll, Preschool Attainment Record: Research Edition (Circle Pines, Minn.: American Guidance Service, Inc., 1966).

3 Lloyd M. Dunn, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Circle Pines, Minn.: American Guidance Service, Inc., 1955).

TABLE 1

COMPARISON BETWEEN OVERALL ADJUSTMENT AND TYPE OF ADOPTION

Adjustment	Type of Adoption						Total
	Traditional		Single Parent		Transracial		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Little or no difficulty	8	14	2	7	8	9	48
Some difficulty	4	4	2	6	4	-	20
Severe difficulty	2	-	4	2	3	2	13
Potential difficulty	3	-	-	4	4	5	16
Unclear, unknown	1	-	-	-	1	1	3
Total	18	18	8	19	20	17	100

children (48 percent) with single parents were judged as having few problems or none at all at the time of the interview; of these thirteen children, the coder saw signs of potential difficulty in four. Six children were thought to have serious problems. The transracially adopted children were seen as doing better, with 70 percent currently having few problems or none at all. However, the coder predicted that nine of the children in this group, 24 percent, would have difficulties in the future. The children in traditional adoptive homes seemed to be best adjusted, though interestingly, disagreement between coder and interviewer was greatest for children in this group. Eighty-eight percent of the children were judged by the interviewer as having few or no problems while the coder saw only 71 percent as free of problems. The coder judged that a high proportion of these children, 23 percent, were currently having some difficulties. Coder and interviewer agreed that only one or two children were displaying serious problems.

Thus the children of single parents seemed to be those currently having the

most difficulty. Interviewers noted that about 25 percent of the children in this group had problems around closeness or emotional distance from the parent and, concomitantly, difficulty in handling the dependence and independence. This percentage was higher than that found in the other two groups. Nearly 50 percent evidenced difficulty in handling aggression and about 50 percent showed symptoms of fear or anxiety. In contrast these factors were found in only 25 percent of the children in the other two adoption groups. However, among the specific measures of sex identification, there was no indication that children of single parents were having problems. Most have close friends, both children and adults, and friends of the opposite sex; these relationships have probably helped them accomplish this identity task. It is possible that sexual identification is accomplished at greater "cost" in the single-parent home or, it is possible that the central problem of the single-parent home lies in the intensity of the relationship between parent and child. Only half the single parents were judged as meeting the child's needs for dependence and independence appropriately.

Turning to another measure of adjustment, the standardized tests, the picture was somewhat less interesting, but not incongruent with other measures of adjustment. There was a tendency for scores on the Preschool Attainment Record (PAR) to be associated with the coder's assessment of adjustment--a tendency which would have been more distinct had not several children of single parents, assessed by the coder as having problems in adjustment, done very well on the PAR.

Nearly all the children performed very well on both the Vineland and the PAR. Because scores were so high one must conclude that either (1) this was an unusual group of children, or (2) interviewers were not sufficiently careful in obtaining accurate information from parents.[1] The latter seems more likely. Because scores were so inflated, it seemed preferable to rely on the coder's evaluation as the major measure of adjustment. Nonetheless, scores in specific areas tested can be compared across groups.

On the Vineland, the traditional adoption group performed more poorly than the other children. Sixteen children from this group (44 percent) scored below the normative "bright average" score of 110, in contrast to only about one-fourth of the children from the other two groups.

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[1] Interviewers disliked the insertion of this long standardized assessment into an already long interview dealing with what seemed more interesting topics. However, errors were probably randomly distributed and the scores are useful for comparisons within the sample.

Patterns on the PAR were similar to the Vineland scores (as would be expected, since this is an expanded form of the Vineland). The mean score for the traditional adoptive children was 120.28, while the mean score for the children of single parents was 124.1, and for transracial adoptive children 125.94. These differences are small.

It is perhaps more interesting to analyze the subscores of the PAR, which give some "profile" of the children's specific strengths. It should be noted that remarkably little variability was found among the subscores; children scoring high on one dimension tended to score high on others, and those scoring low on one dimension scored low on others. This may well be another indicator that interviewers failed to obtain specific information. However, there are some differences.

Of all subscores, the physical dimension is the only one which seems unrelated to other measures of adjustment. All three groups scored almost exactly the same on this dimension, with a high proportion of the scores clustering around the mean.

Both social and communication subscores showed some relationship to the coder's assessment of adjustment--again the pattern would have been stronger with the single-parent group omitted. In communication, the transracial adoptive group scored appreciably better than either of the other groups, with about three-quarters of these children scoring above the mean. On the social dimension the traditional adoptive children had the lowest scores.

The intellectual dimension seemed to have the most inflated scores, and scores were not related to other measures of adjustment. The children of single parents did poorest in this area.

Another and probably better measure of intellectual and communication capacity is the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Administered to the children, it was not subject to parental distortion. The intent in including this test was to identify children whose verbal functioning was far below normal; none was found. The mean scores were near the normative ones for the test. Again the transracial adoptive children, with a mean score of 105.09 did slightly better than the children of single parents (97.89) or traditional adoptive children (97.56). No association was found between these scores and rating of overall adjustment, though the four children scoring above 130 were all considered well adjusted, and there was some question about the adjustment of all seven children who were not tested.

These standardized tests thus indicate that, on certain specifically measured dimensions, children in this group are functioning well. While there may be question about the sensitivity of these measurements, the overall picture is encouraging.

Characteristics of the children and adjustment

Some association might be expected between certain characteristics of children and poor adjustment. Table 1 shows that, as in other adoption studies, boys are somewhat more prone to difficulty than girls. Surprisingly, illness of a serious or chronic nature did not seem to be associated with overall adjustment, though numbers are small, and the sample includes no children with serious handicaps.

There is some evidence that the child's adjustment at the second interview, at three-and-one-half or four years old, may be affected by very early preadoptive experiences. Of the thirteen children placed at age nine months or older, only one seemed free of present problems or potential problems ($x^2 = 11.05$, $p < .01$). This finding is complex, however. Forty-two children had problems prior to placement--difficulties prenatally or at delivery, hospitalization, multiple foster home placements, and poor care prior to adoption. These experiences which become somewhat more likely for children with longer foster care histories are also associated with adjustment problems ($x^2 = 8.99$, $p < .01$). It must be noted that eight of the thirteen children placed at nine months or older were adopted by single parents. It is unclear whether it is the type of adoption, the late placement, poor preadoptive experiences, or interaction of these variables that precipitates poor adjustment.

Parental characteristics and adjustment

A number of parental actions and attitudes were assessed with the expectation that some association with a child's adjustment would be found. These have been classified as (1) involvement in being a parent, (2) current attitudes toward the child, (3) support derived from the marital relationship, (4) attitudes toward adoption, and (5) early experiences with the child.

Predictably, the mother's involvement, activity, and level of interest and energy were found to be very important to children of this age. In 60 percent of the families the mother carried major responsibility for child care, and in another 16 percent she shared it equally with a father or relative. Of

the nine children where mother took little responsibility, eight demonstrated problems; of the eleven children where care was shared with a nonrelative, five were having difficulty. A rater's assessment of mothers' involvement in parenting showed the same trend; of the twenty-six children whose mothers' involvement was moderate or low, twenty were displaying problems, or seen as potentially having problems ($x^2 = 13.85$, 1 d.f., $p < .01$). Mother-child communication was also important; seventeen of the twenty-four children in families where communication was poor displayed problems ($x^2 = 6.52$, 1 d.f., $p < .05$). Fathers' involvement with these young children seemed to be less critical than mothers'.

The interviewers made a whole series of ratings on handling the role of parent. Major elements were: individualization of the child, emotional support given the child, and overall comfort with the parenting role. "High" ratings in all three of these, for both mothers and fathers, were significantly associated with positive outcome ($p < .01$). These three ratings are doubtless closely interrelated, and, unfortunately, it cannot be demonstrated that the child's interviewer rated the child's adjustment completely without knowledge of these parental factors. Consequently this theoretically expected finding is not totally surprising.

One would expect the marital relationship to be important in family stability and in positive interaction, and thus be reflected in the child's adjustment. Effectiveness of communication seems an important element. The seven children with severe problems in two-parent homes all had parents who were seen as having a moderate to low level of effective communication, though no association was found between this factor and the children with minor adjustment problems.

Another series of ratings on a variety of factors--comfort with adoption, motivation to adopt, attitude of grandparents at the time of adoption and their later acceptance of the child, flexibility in parents about the child's characteristics at the time of adoption and later feelings that the adopted child matched the image of the child expected--had no association with the child's adjustment. These items may affect parental handling of the issue of adoption (see adoption section, p. 49) and thus may have more impact on the child later in life.

Few of the judgments made about family experiences in the months immediately following placement of the child, and reported in the first report of the study, seem associated with the child's adjustment three or four years later. Early problems, apparently, have been resolved. The exception

seemed to be found in single-parent homes. Four single parents seemed to experience disappointment or considerable anxiety in the weeks following placement; all four of these children were later having difficulties. Eleven single mothers were thought to be relatively insensitive to their children's needs in the weeks following placement; eight of these children were having difficulties at age four, and it was expected that the other three would develop problems. One might infer that a single mother's reactions are more intense and enduring because they are not diluted and modified by other family members.

The most troubled children

Thirteen children--nine boys and four girls--were seen by the coder as having severe difficulty at the second follow-up visit. Six were from single-parent homes, five from transracial homes and two from traditional adoptive homes. This is an interesting group of children--most are not children with poor health and histories of developmental problems or frequent placements, the kinds of children that adoption workers place cautiously and for whom a guarded prognosis is expected.

Only four of the children were nine months old or older at placement. These four have similar preadoption histories of two or more placements, in some of which the care was questionable. Information on the early development of the four is lacking due to the circumstances of their early months; however, all four were thought to have some developmental problems upon entering their present adoptive homes. Three of the children have also had some health problems since placement.

With such problematic beginnings, it is not surprising that these four children have continued to have difficulties. They were described at the second interview as sad children, frequently withdrawn, fearful and anxious. While one or two of the adoptive parents had felt they had made progress since the placement, the strain of coping with the many difficulties accompanying the placements had taken a toll on the parents as well.

All four of these children were adopted by single parents, each becoming a parent for the first time. Three of the parents lived with relatives who did provide some support and help with the caretaking responsibility. Overall the parents seemed overwhelmed with the extent of care required and with some of the children's specific problems.

The nine children placed at age four months or younger presented a different picture, all having had only one placement with good care prior to adoption. The development of all but one of the children in this group was average or better at adoption.

At the first follow-up visit many families from this group had experienced some difficulty with the child. Four were tense, fussy babies, and two others were described by the research analyst as passive and unresponsive. Several families had members whom the interviewers described as depressed. Despite these problems, which are easy to highlight as such in hindsight, only three of these children were thought to be having serious difficulty when families were visited for the first interview.

When interviewed for the second phase of the study, three of these nine children were described as apathetic and lifeless. Their passivity was striking. Two had serious speech problems, and all three children scored in the low range on tests of overall development as well as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Interviewers noted the lack of stimulation in two of the homes. The other child showed indications of severe developmental problems; parental expectations for this child were thought to be appropriate.

The other six children with serious problems were described as tense and anxious. Four of them either refused to participate or were unable to concentrate on the testing. Other behaviors common to these children were head banging and rocking, frequent temper tantrums, high activity levels, sleep problems, and difficulty in handling aggression.

Adjustment over time

One cannot conclude a description of children's adjustment in a longitudinal study without looking back to see what has happened to that group of children identified as most troubled in the first phase of the study, coincidentally also thirteen in number. They were described in the 1975 publication as follows:

> The most troubled children. These thirteen children did indeed exhibit problems of concern. As one details them, the overall thread seems to be a lack of appropriate social responsiveness.

Five of the children were three months of age. They were described as passive, anxious, unresponsive, "hard to love." In addition, four were inactive babies with poor muscle tone, behind in motor development; four displayed no babbling or other vocalizations (other than crying) and three had problems with eating.

The same description fits five infants from four to seven months of age. All were passive and unresponsive, behind in motor development and delayed in early vocalizing. Two had eating difficulties. One was described by the interviewer as "a very delicate, worried-looking child."

An 11-month-old presented a picture of extreme fear of strangers, with nausea and vomiting after a stranger left. He was a fearful, sad child who resisted being alone, clinging to the mother. He had many colds and stomach upsets.

The threads of anxiety and inhibition were also apparent in the two older children, age three and four,[1] in this problem group. Both talked little, were withdrawn, were concerned about being "good," and clung to their mothers. Both seemed retarded in motor and verbal skills.[2]

Ten of these thirteen children had been adopted when less than four months old, and seven of them were doing very well at age four, achieving at an average or better level and displaying few problems. Thus the seven were not part of the group of thirteen children identified as most troubled during the second phase of the study. The parents of these ten children were described after the second interview as highly involved with their children and enjoying them. However, one mother and child still exhibited tension and extreme dependence on each other. Otherwise it would appear that difficulties observed in these children and their families at the first interview were temporary, and related to change in the family at the time of placement.

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[1] This 4-year-old child was included in the sample, though older, because of error in the original sample selection and the family's subsequent enthusiasm about being part of the study.

[2] Shireman and Johnson, Adoption: Three Alternatives, pp. 18-19.

The other three children identified as most troubled in the first phase of the study were still having problems at age four with developmental tasks, and in relationships with their parents. Two of the three were described as having serious difficulty, both being depressed; the third was having moderate difficulty with problems of anxiety and aggression. The parents of these three children did not appear to be much involved in, or take much pleasure from parenting.

The other three children in this group of thirteen had serious difficulty before placement and at both the first and second contact. All three were older at adoption with poor preadoptive histories. They have been described among those children having serious difficulty at the second interview who were nine months or older at adoption.

In summary, seven of these thirteen children were free of problems at age four, one child was having moderate problems, and five were still experiencing severe problems. Three of the six children with continuing problems were placed very young with families whose capacity to nurture seems questionable. The other three children were placed at over nine months, after experiencing multiple placements and poor care, with families who apparently have been unable to meet the unusual demands of these children.

Summary

This is a group of healthy children, most of whom are developing well within close and strong families. A slightly higher proportion of children in this study are judged to be doing well than has been found in several other studies of traditional adoptions. Children in homes with two parents, whether black or white, are doing particularly well.

A high proportion of children adopted by single parents seemed to be having difficulty, either displaying symptoms of tension or anxiety, or in handling aggressive impulses. The children of single parents also seemed to have a higher proportion of problems with emotional closeness and distance in relating to the parent, than is found in other types of adoption. However, a high proportion of children placed with single parents were older than nine months at adoption, with prior multiple placements and in some cases, poor care before adoption, factors also associated with later development problems. The interaction of these variables can only be a subject for further study.

Perhaps most interesting is the change in problems and difficulties over

time. Of the thirteen children demonstrating serious problems immediately after placement, only five were still displaying serious problems at age four. Except among the single parents, early parental stress around caring for the adopted child seems to be resolved; one could infer that the reactions of single parents are more intense and enduring because they are not tempered by those of a second parent.

Interviewer judgment of the child's adjustment was probably confounded with knowledge of the parent's attitudes and similarly, assessment of parental capacity confounded with knowledge of the child's adjustment, since both interviewers participated in an initial family interview. However, it is of some interest that positive attitudes toward the child and toward the role of parent, that maternal involvement in caretaking (but not paternal involvement), and that positive patterns of communication within the family all were associated with good adjustment for the child. Thus the data support the theoretical expectations.

RACIAL AWARENESS, PREFERENCE AND IDENTITY

As indicated in the introductory sections of this report, current practitioners and theorists have raised serious and continuing question about using white persons as parents for black children in need of homes. At least in their early years, there seems little question that the overall adjustment of children in transracial homes is good. Question is raised about whether it is possible for such children to develop a sound racial identity.

In this section will be reported the results of three projective tests used to measure the racial awareness, preference, and identity of these young children. Focus is on the transracially adopted children, but the data are made meaningful only through comparison with the other children who are being raised by black parents.[1]

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[1] Two of the single parents were white women. In order to simplify the analysis and discussion, they have been removed from this section.

Measurements

Three measures of racial awareness, preference, and identity were used. The Clark Doll Test[1] was first reported in 1947 and has been extensively used in assessing racial awareness, preference, and identity. An adaptation of semantic differential testing[2] was used to attain greater depth in measurement of racial preference. Finally, the child arranged and identified family members from a doll puzzle which was adapted from one developed for an earlier study of transracial adoptions;[3] racial preference and identity were measured in this puzzle.

In the Clark Doll Test the child was presented with a black and a white baby doll, each doll dressed only in a diaper. The interviewer asked the child to point to the doll that he preferred in answer to a series of questions. The test, which seems simplistic, tends to evoke quite thoughtful responses in young children.

Following the Clark Doll Test, the child was shown twenty-four sets of pictures. Each set contained two pictures of the same object. In half of the sets, one object was colored black and the other white; in the other half, "placebos," objects were red, green, blue or some other color. The child was told a two-line story as each pair was shown, and each story ended with the child being asked to choose the object that was, for example, bad, stupid, pretty. This test provided an instrument of demonstrated reliability with which another assessment of racial preference could be made.

In the third task the child was asked to arrange and identify family members

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1 Kenneth B. Clark and Mamie P. Clark, "Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children," in Readings in Social Psychology, ed. E. E. Maccoby, T. M. Newcomb, and E. Hartley (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1958).

2 J. E. Williams and J. K. Roberson, "A Method for Assessing Racial Attitudes in Preschool Children," Education and Psychological Measurement 27 (1967), pp. 671-89. See also Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, The Measurement of Meaning (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957).

3 Rita J. Simon and Howard Altstein, Transracial Adoption (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1977), pp. 155-58.

from a large plywood puzzle. Twelve figures were developed which could be fitted into a large sectioned frame. There were two mothers, two fathers, two girls, two boys, two young children of indeterminate sex, and two grandmother figures. One of each of these was black, the other white; they were identically dressed. The children were asked to make a family of five people, of four, and then their own family. They were also asked specific questions about individual pieces to ascertain awareness of race, racial preference, and finally their own racial identity.

Validity of the tests is difficult to assess. All have been used in prior studies with this age group, and the degree to which findings from the present study are congruent with those of other studies may be one measure of validity. Another measure is the degree to which children give the same responses to tests designed to measure the same thing.

Both the Clark Doll Test and the doll puzzle contained an item, "Which doll looks like you?", intended to assess racial identity. In the traditional adoptive group twelve children, 37 percent of those responding, reported a white identity in both items, while fifteen children in the transracial group, half of those responding, reported a black identity in both tests. Otherwise scores shifted between tests. The Clark Doll Test as the older and more widely used instrument was selected as the primary measure of identity in this analysis. It should be noted, however, that the difference between the transracial and traditional adoptive groups is more marked on the puzzle assessment and attains statistical significance ($x^2 = 5.77$, $p < .05$).

Similar comparisons were made among the items assessing racial preference. A similar pattern of instability of response was found. The picture cards and the Clark Doll Test were selected as the major instruments to measure racial preference in the analysis, as their length, former usage, and very direct approach to black/white preference seem to give them unique strength. Possibly the various tests are measuring slightly different aspects of racial attitudes. Probably the attitudes of young children are unstable. The tests used in the analysis must be viewed only as rough indicators of the constructs measured.

Racial Awareness

The principal measure of racial awareness was contained in the Clark Doll Test, when the child was asked to identify the doll that "looks like a black child" and the one that "looks like a white child." Most children, over 80 percent made the correct racial identification. Transracial adoptive chil-

dren were most accurate, 94 percent correctly identifying the white doll and 88 percent the black doll. This is a higher percentage than has been found in Simon's study of a group of transracial adoptive children (1977, pp. 143-44).

The use of the doll puzzle to "put your family together" was a measure primarily of the children's awareness of the racial composition of their families. An astonishingly small proportion of children in black homes created correct families--five children of single parents and six traditional adoptive children. Most "errors" were in the race of children in the families. Sixteen children of single parents (89 percent) and seventeen traditional adoptive children (53 percent) correctly identified the race of their parents. In the transracial adoption group eighteen children (58 percent) created families in which both parents were white and some children black--probably "correct" families. None of the transracial adoptive children gave their created families two black parents, but eight created families with a black father and three with a black mother (36 percent). Since transracial adoptive children were so accurate in racial identification, this may be interpreted as some evidence of a wish for black parents, though 40 percent of the traditional adoptive children put at least one white parent into "their" families. Thus the children seemed to be aware of race and for the most part accurate in identifying race. Accuracy in creating "my" family may be confounded by the child's wishes and racial preference.

Racial preference

Racial preference probably was best measured by the picture test and the Clark Doll Test; the tenuous interrelationship between these measures has been reported. The first four items on the Clark Doll Test were scored for analysis, as these items refer specifically to racial preference.

The transracial adoptive group showed a racial preference pattern markedly different from the other two groups. One-quarter made no white preference choices. As is shown in Table 2, they displayed a significantly lower white preference and, correspondingly, a higher black preference ($x^2 = 9.85$, $p < .05$). These scores are similar to those found by Simon. The mean white preference score for black transracially adopted children in the Simon study is 1.8 (1977, p. 139); the mean score of this group of transracially adopted children is 1.9 compared to a mean white preference score of 2.6 for the other groups.

TABLE 2

COMPARISON BETWEEN CLARK DOLL TEST RACIAL PREFERENCE SELECTIONS AND TYPE OF ADOPTION

White Preference Scores		Adoptive Group			
		Single Parent	Transracial	Traditional	Total
High	4	9	8	11	28
	3	2	6	10	18
	2	6	3	9	18
Low	1	6	7	2	15
	0	1	9	3	13
Incomplete		1	4	1	6
Total		25[a]	37[b]	36	98

[a] Responses of the two children with white parents have been excluded.

[b] One of the transracial families adopted twins; thus 37 children are shown in the table.

Questions of racial preference on the doll puzzle drew mixed and contradictory responses which did not differentiate among groups and differences were not marked on the black and white picture test. All children tended to display positive white and negative black attitudes, as shown in Table 3. The transracial adoptive children had lower positive black scores than did those in Simon's transracial sample (1977, p. 150). They were younger than Simon's subjects, however, and in Simon's study it was the six- and seven-year-olds who were more likely to make positive black responses.

Racial preference scores thus were difficult to interpret. On the Clark Doll Test the transracial adoptive children displayed a greater black preference than did children in the other two groups. This difference, however, was not sustained on other measures of racial preference.

TABLE 3

COMPARISON BETWEEN MEAN POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SCORES FOR BLACK AND WHITE PICTURES AND TYPE OF ADOPTION

Score	Adoptive Group			
	Single Parent	Transracial	Traditional	Total
Positive				
Black	1.9	1.1	1.7	1.6
White	4.1	4.9	4.3	4.4
	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Negative				
Black	4.2	4.6	4.3	4.4
White	1.8	1.4	1.7	1.6
	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0

Racial identity

The primary measure of racial identity was the question from the Clark Doll Test, "Which doll looks like you?" Of the transracial adoptive children 70.6 percent chose the black doll, as did 60 percent of the children in single-parent homes and only a little more than half of the children in traditional adoptive homes. The difference, displayed in Table 4, was not statistically significant. Patterns of response in other questions concerning racial identity were similar.

TABLE 4

COMPARISON BETWEEN CLARK DOLL TEST RACIAL IDENTITY SELECTIONS AND TYPE OF ADOPTION

Type of Adoption	Doll Selection			
	White	Black	No Choice	Total
Single parent	8 (32%)	15 (60%)	2 (8%)	25
Transracial	9 (26%)	24 (71%)	1 (3%)	34
Traditional	16 (47%)	18 (53%)		34
Total	33	57	3	93

Racial preference and identity

Of particular concern in this study were the children who identified themselves as black but exhibited a strong white preference, an uncomfortable situation it would seem. Using the Clark Doll Test scores, the mix of preference and identity was examined. As shown in Table 5, half of the transracial adoptive children might be considered comfortable in a black identity, as are just over a third of those adopted by single parents and a quarter of those adopted by black parents. A high proportion of those in black homes were in the "uncomfortable" position of viewing themselves as black but having a white preference. Differences are suggestive, but do not attain statistical significance.

TABLE 5

COMPARISON BETWEEN RACIAL PREFERENCE AND IDENTITY AND TYPE OF ADOPTION

Type of Adoption	Identity and Preference				
	Black with black or no preference	Black with white preference	White with black preference	White with white or no preference	Total
Single parent	9	6	2	7	24
Transracial	17	7	1	8	33
Traditional	8	10	1	15	34
Total	34	23	4	30	91

Factors associated with racial preference and identity

There are many other factors which might be associated with racial attitudes and identity, and which might be expected to be even more critical than type of adoption. Some of the most important of these were investigated.

As identity formation is a developmental process, it was expected that older children would increasingly adopt a black identity and, hopefully, black preference. There seemed to be no association of racial identity and/or preference with age, though of the six transracially adopted children over four years of age, only one displayed a white preference. Social maturity, as measured on the Preschool Attainment Record, also was not associated with preference or identity.

In the black homes twenty-three girls and ten boys identified themselves as black; the difference was significant ($x^2 = 2.798$, $p < .10$). There was no difference between sexes in expressed preference, and no such tendency among transracial adoptive children.

As might be expected, there is a significant tendency for light-skinned children to identify themselves as white, and darker ones as black ($x^2 = 5.43$, 2 d.f., $p < .10$). (See Table 6.) This was evident in all adoptive situations. There was no association with skin shade and racial preference.

TABLE 6

COMPARISON BETWEEN RACIAL IDENTIFICATION AND SKIN SHADE

Identification	Skin Shade			
	Light	Medium	Dark	Total
Black	8	23	25	56
White	12	11	11	34
Total	20	34	36	90

One-third of the children in transracial adoptive homes were light, as were only 14 percent of the children in other homes. Thus the high proportion of transracial adoptive children who identify themselves as black takes on added significance. Only one light-skinned child in a home with black parents identified himself as black.

Exposure to black companions and experiences related to black culture might be expected to enhance black identification. This did not seem to be the case among these young children. Families tended to live in neighborhoods reflecting the parents' race, and for the transracial adoptive children exposure to black friends, either children or adults, seemed to make no difference in the expressed racial preference or identity. About 40 percent of the families in each group had items related to black culture in their homes; only among the children of single parents (who were slightly older)was this associated with a black identification.

The experiences of transracial adoptive children were, as might be expected, different from those children in the other two adoption groups. About one-third had experienced some racial discrimination, as had only 9.8 percent of the other children, a statistically significant difference ($x^2 = 8.28$, $p < .01$). All but three transracial families had at least vague plans for helping the child develop black racial identity (as had 75 percent of the other families). Building self-esteem, providing love, and creating a sense of being a "worthwhile person" were emphasized by about one-half of the transracial adoptive parents as ways of helping the child handle blackness. Transracial parents showed considerable "push" to integrate the children into their white worlds: 34 percent saw physical resemblance to themselves; 55 percent wished the children to identify as members of "both races" or "the human race"; and about one-third did not think that their families' racial identities changed with the adoption. None of these factors seemed to be associated with the child's expressed racial preference or identity.

Summary

The measurements of racial awareness, preference, and identity were not consistent, indicating either poor validity, slight differences in the constructs being measured by different tests, or the instability of responses of young children. However, the congruence of some findings with those of other studies increases confidence in the measures.

Nearly all children--more than 80 percent-- were aware of race and could correctly identify white and black. Transracial adoptive children displayed a significantly stronger black preference than did children in black families on some, though not all measures; it was possible that a marked ambivalence was being picked up. This black identification occurred despite the fact that this was a younger group and had a higher proportion of

light-skinned children. A black identification was matched with a black preference for half of the transracial adoptive children, more than any other group. Few studied variables were associated with racial identity and none with racial preference. In black homes, a higher proportion of girls identified themselves as black, and in all homes darker skin color was associated with black identity. Neither family nor community influences seemed associated with the child's expressed identity.

SEXUAL AWARENESS, PREFERENCE AND IDENTITY

Issues of sexual identity were studied with care, for development of appropriate sexual identity is one of the tasks of the child in his first four years. Following the postulates of psychoanalytically based theories, hypotheses for this study stated children adopted by single parents might display retardation or confusion in this task.

Measurements

Sexual preference was measured by an adaptation of the picture card test used in assessing racial preference, and by a toy preference test. In the picture card test each child was asked to respond to twenty-four sets of pictures of boys and girls. Attached to each set of pictures was a two-line story which ended with the interviewer asking the child to select the boy or girl who was smart, naughty, or clean. Like the racial preference test, twelve sets of pictures were dummies.

In the Toy Selection Test the child was asked to indicate in matched pairs of pictured toys--one traditionally "masculine" and one traditionally "feminine" toy in each pair--the toy with which he would prefer to play.[1]

[1] Interviewers expressed considerable question about this measure as it seemed that many variables were confounding the children's choices.

In addition two questions were asked about figures in the doll puzzle: "Which child is coming to play?" and "Which child would you like to have come to play?" In a rather unstructured introductory interview with the child, additional questions asked included, "What do you like to do?"; "What do you want to be when you grow up?"; "What are your favorite toys?" From the totality of this material, plus observations of the child, the interviewer assessed whether the child had indeed formed an appropriate sexual identity.[1]

Cross tabulations of the various measurements tend to substantiate their validity. The five children whom the interviewers identified as displaying difficulty in sexual identity all either displayed deviant responses on the tests or were unable to take the tests. The question of which child (boy or girl) the child would like to have come to play was associated with scores on the picture card test, the association attaining statistical significance for boys ($p < .05$) and being in the expected direction for girls. Patterns of response on the Toy Selection Test did not differentiate among boys, and approximately three-quarters of the girls who preferred feminine toys had high positive girl scores on the picture card test. Although again, the mix of tests used and the instability of small children's responses prevented close correlation of responses among tests, there was enough consistency in responses to create confidence that dimensions of sexual awareness, preference, and identity were being measured.

Awareness

As expected, children seemed to have formed fairly accurate ideas of boys and girls and which they were. Interviewers judged that all but one (a transracially adopted child) were aware of their own sex. Parents agreed that their children were aware of differences between the sexes, with only two dissenting (one single parent, one traditional adoptive parent). Eight black parents were unsure of the extent of their children's awareness.

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[1] Reliability of this measure showed perfect agreement. As it is based on fairly extensive observation and interaction, it is the authors' opinion that this assessment is reasonably valid.

Preference

Sexual preference was measured mainly through the picture card test. This was supplemented by analysis of the Toy Selection Test score, and by the child's responses on the puzzle when asked, "Which child is coming to play?" and "Which child would you like to play with?" These were considered the most direct measures of preference.

The scores on the picture card test, displayed in Table 7, differentiated among the girls much more sharply than among the boys, whose positive and negative scores were all very close to the midpoint of 3. Among the girls, one sees a clear differentiation of high-positive girl scores coupled with low-positive boy scores; as with the boys, little differentiation was found among negative scores.

TABLE 7

MEAN POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SCORES FOR GIRL AND BOY PICTURE CARD SELECTIONS

Mean Score		Single	Transracial	Traditional	Total
GIRLS	Positive girl	4.6	4.1	4.7	4.5
	Positive boy	1.4	1.9	1.3	1.5
	Negative girl	2.7	1.9	2.5	2.4
	Negative boy	3.3	4.1	3.5	3.6
BOYS	Positive girl	3.2	3.1	2.7	3.0
	Positive boy	2.8	2.9	3.3	3.0
	Negative girl	3.2	2.9	2.5	2.9
	Negative boy	2.8	3.1	3.5	3.1

Though the differences are small, the scores followed expected directions with the exception of the transracial adoptive boys' overall scores, and the positive scores of the eight boys of single parents. The scores of the transracial adoptive boys were particularly puzzling, for the girls in transracial homes showed very strong preference for girls. Although it is difficult to find an explanation for this observation, it must be remembered that differences among the boys' scores were very small.

If the girls displayed sex preferences more strongly on the picture card measurement, the boys did so on the Toy Selection Test. Among the boys, only three chose a mixture of girls' and boys' toys, and none chose predominantly feminine toys. Among the girls who took the test, sixteen chose predominantly girls' toys, eighteen a mixture, and thirteen predominantly boys' toys. The test may not be particularly useful in assessing sexual preference or identity, but it is an interesting indicator of society's pressures on young children. Apparently girls are "permitted" to enjoy a variety of toys, but boys must prefer those traditionally considered masculine.

The questions asked about puzzle figures drew interesting responses. Asked which child was coming to play, slightly more than half the boys suggested a boy, and about two-thirds of the girls suggested a girl. These responses were not consistently associated with other measures of preference, and it might be assumed that the reality of usual and expected playmates intervened. Asked with which child they would like to play, the children gave responses that seemed more indicative of preference; 35 of 47 girls chose a girl, and 19 of the 32 boys chose a boy (this was significantly associated with positive boy scores on the picture card test). A strong preference for a male playmate was found among the boys, except for those from transracial adoptive homes. Again, this group of boys appeared to have somewhat different preferences.

Thus, among the measures of sexual preference, there was no indication that children of single parents were in any way having problems with sexual identity. The only children to show a consistently different pattern were the group of boys from transracial homes, a higher proportion of whom displayed more favorable attitudes and preferences toward girls.

Identity

In assessing the child's formation of appropriate sexual identity, interviewers saw difficulties for only five children--one in transracial adoption, one in traditional adoption, and three children adopted by single parents. This was the only indicator of problems with sexual identity for children of single parents, and numbers were very small. One of the three is the son of a male single parent, a seriously troubled child in a troubled situation. The other two are girls placed young and living with single mothers. One has had two difficult separation experiences; the other is not developing intellectually as well as might be expected, but there is no known explanation for the identity problem.

Asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, only eight children named an occupation traditional for the opposite sex; four of these children were from transracial homes where roles were defined quite flexibly. The other four were from traditional adoptive homes.

Thus, on the whole, the hypotheses that children adopted by single parents would have more difficulty with sexual identity, and that at this age such difficulty would be clearly manifested, were not supported.

Family patterns and attitudes

Examining patterns of family living may provide some indicators of differences discovered. All children of single parents except for two have close adult friends of the opposite sex, as do most children in the other two adoption groups. Single parents apparently make a greater effort than other parents to see that their children play with children of both sexes; only six play exclusively with children of the same sex, as do almost half of the children in transracial and traditional adoptive homes. Since most of the children were in at least part-day nursery school, such differences may not have been significant.

In about three-quarters of the families the mother was the primary caretaker of the child. Father's involvement was high in about 70 percent of the two-parent families, so in this respect children of single parents had a different experience. Roles were traditionally assigned in all groups and were defined clearly. However, among the transracial families there was a significantly higher degree of flexibility in shifting and adapting roles when necessary.

Parental expectations of differences in behavior and attitudes between boys and girls was also of interest. The transracially adopting parents were different. Only one-third of the white parents and about two-thirds of the black expected differences in behavior between boys and girls. More than half of the black families taught differing behavior patterns, as did only three of the transracial adoptive families.

In verbal discussion of sexual matters, again the transracial adoptive families followed a different pattern, seeming to be more open. All but three transracial adoptive parents have discussed the differences between men and women with their children, while twenty-one black parents have not ($x^2 = 7.9$, $p < .01$). The same pattern (though less strong) was evident in handling the child's questions about "Where do babies come from?", in willingness to discuss sex, and in making decisions about what sex information was appropriate for a 4-year-old to have.

Summary

Most of the children were having no difficulty with the developmental task of sexual identification, at least as was measured in this study. The single-parent family structure was not associated with any problems. Role flexibility, discussion of questions about sex, and attitudes toward sexual differentiation seemed to distinguish the transracial families, and may in part explain the slightly different patterns these boys displayed.

ADOPTION

The families in this study were unique because of the way in which they were formed. At least one, and in some cases two or more of the children entered their families through adoption.

Disclosure of adoption

Thinking of adoption experts about the appropriate time to tell a child the facts of adoption has changed in recent years. Families in this study provided an opportunity to explore this issue with adoptive parents and to find out when and how they thought it best to inform children of their adoptive status.

Families in the sample were found to be approaching their children differently, depending perhaps upon comfort in discussing adoption with their children, and upon sensitivity to and awareness of their children's intellectual and emotional capacities to understand and digest the information. Disclosure of adoption also may be influenced by circumstances unique to an adoption or a family. It seemed probable that families with observable differences in physical appearance, and in social situation, would be more likely to be confronted with inquiries about these differences both from outsiders and the children themselves.

While most of the families have mentioned adoption to their children, fewer than half the children (42 percent) in traditional adoptive homes understood that they were adopted and only one of these children has asked questions about the adoption. Similarly, 41 percent of the children in single-parent homes understood that they were adopted; however, seven of these eleven children have asked questions about the adoption. In contrast, 73 percent of the children in the transracial homes understood about the adoption and 27 percent of these have asked questions about it. Children knowing nothing about the adoption numbered thirteen in traditional adoptive homes (36 percent), nine in single-parent homes (33 percent) and two in transracial homes (5 percent).

Given that so few children have raised questions about adoption, one might conclude that at this age children are not very curious about their origins. The adoptive parents seemed to concur as only three single parents, eight white couples and one black couple felt their children were concerned about adoption at this age.

While most parents intended to acquaint their children with the fact of adoption, a number of parents were undecided about whether to do so. Seven single parents and ten traditional adoptive parents were unsure about whether or not to inform their children of the adoption. Only two transracial adoptive couples expressed uncertainty, not about informing the children of the adoption, but about how much family history and background to

communicate. Three families (one single parent and two black couples) had decided not to inform their children of their adoption.

For those families who were planning to tell their children of the adoption or had already done so, many had some rather definite ideas about how one should go about this process. More than half intended to answer their children's questions, when they arose. Ten of these families specified they preferred to wait until the children were older before giving them this information, and another ten felt that only limited information should be given when and if the children asked for it. Another one-quarter of the parents (three single parents, twelve white couples, and ten black couples) intended to tell their children all they knew, and were inviting an open discussion of the adoption. Of interest is the fact that only three children from this group of families knew nothing about their adoptions, and that the three children who had discussed adoption freely and openly with their parents were also from this group.

In considering the kinds of information possessed about the origins of their children, nearly half the families expressed a wish for more facts about the adoption. Fifteen families specifically wanted more health and medical history of the children and the biologic families. Others had hoped for more description of the biologic parents' personality characteristics, especially those of the biologic father. Some families wanted more information in both areas.

The lack of a complete medical history was a major area of concern to at least eighteen families, six from each group. A few of these parents had felt this loss acutely, as their children had developed serious illnesses, and the health histories of the children's biological parents would have been very helpful in these instances. Several parents specifically mentioned the necessity at the very least of obtaining the family history for sickle cell trait, or other conditions common to black children. The brevity of background material in general was of concern to at least ten other families.

Impact of adoption

The addition of a child to a family produces changes within the immediate family as well as changes in relationships with extended family members, friends and work associates. Only seven families reported that changes in family relationships produced by the adoption were negative. For those seven families (six transracial and one traditional adoption) who felt that

relationships with extended family members had deteriorated since the child's adoption, only the black couple indicated that the family's reaction was concerned with the adoption itself. In this instance the resistance of relatives was related to questions about the child's ancestors and the possibility that the child may have "bad blood."

The six white couples did not encounter family resistance based on conviction that a child should enter a family through birth rather than adoption. The extended family members of this group objected to the child's race. A couple of these adoptive parents were disowned by their parents at the time of adoption; one couple had not spoken to one set of grandparents for four years. For others of these six families current relationships were tense at best and often characterized by infrequent contact and depreciating comments made to or about the child and the child's race.

While only a handful of families met with mainly adverse reactions of relatives to the adoption, for another ten families (nine transracial and one traditional adoption) reactions were mixed with some family members supporting the adoption and others dubious about the plan to adopt a black child or to adopt at all. Sixteen other families were confronted with initial resistance to the adoption, but relationships were quickly mended (frequently as a result of the relatives becoming acquainted with the child). These families (four single parent, ten transracial, and two traditional adoptions) now enjoy positive relationships with grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

Except for the transracial families, the great majority of the adoptive parents received full support from extended family members. Eighty-five percent of the single parents and 89 percent of the black couples reported that relationships were positive; eleven of these families thought that these relationships were better than before the adoption. The transracial families felt the effects of the adoption on relationships with extended family most keenly. Only 30 percent indicated that family members were unequivocally supportive.

While for some of the adoptive parents, extended family support and acceptance of the adoption was lacking, all three adoptive groups enjoyed support extended by friends. Only one traditional adoptive couple reported friends were mostly negative about the adoption, and three single parents and seven transracial adoptive couples received some positive and some negative reactions from friends. Neighbors were similarly accepting of the adoption, although seven traditional adoptive couples and two single parents indicated neighbors were unaware of the adoption. Only a few

families (one single parent and three transracial adoptive couples) described neighbors as mostly negative, and another ten families (nine transracial families and one traditional adoptive family) confronted some negative as well as positive reactions from neighbors.

The agency's role

Families were asked what services they thought the agency might continue to provide at the present and in the future. As might be expected, parents involved in "special" adoptions mentioned continued service more often than traditional adoptive families. Four single-parent families and seven transracial families said that they would appreciate continued counseling services. Four transracial families expressed a desire for group meetings (some other transracial families were already involved in groups, not sponsored by the agency, such as the Open Door Society). Three single parents expressed a wish that financial subsidy had been available when they adopted. However, approximately two-thirds of the families did not express need for services, and 78 percent of the traditional adoptive families said that they needed no further help from the agency. Thus, these families, on the whole, seemed to be functioning independently. Did the higher proportion of special adoptive families expressing a wish for continued contact with the agency stem from greater problems in single-parent or transracial adoption, or did it stem from less of a need in special adoptive families to see the family as "just like everyone else's," or is there some other explanation? The question is open.

As a final note, a look back was made to discover if the worker's evaluation of the home at the time of adoptive placement had been in any way predictive. Workers had been enthusiastic about only one-third of the single-parent homes, and more than half of the two-parent homes. However, 40 percent of the children in single-parent homes about which the workers had been enthusiastic were exhibiting problems of varying degrees of intensity, as were 35 percent of the children in transracial homes and 22 percent of the children in traditional homes. Of the 14 children placed in homes about which the workers expressed reluctance or uncertainty, only three were displaying serious problems at age four, and two showed a lesser degree of difficulty--again about 40 percent displayed problems. Thus one can only conclude that the adoptive worker's evaluation of the home prior to placement has, when the child is four-years-old, no predictive power.

Summary

Adoption is apparently not an issue of concern to children at this age. Though most of the families have mentioned adoption to their children, very few children have raised questions. Family groups varied in the extent to which they had discussed adoption, with a higher proportion of transracial families having had fairly extensive discussions. Nearly half the families expressed a wish to know more about their children's biologic backgrounds with questions about medical history being most frequently mentioned. About half of the transracial adoptive couples reported that extended family members remained dubious or opposed to the adoption; among the other families the adoptive parents received full support and enthusiasm from their extended families. Likewise, neighbors and especially friends tended to be supportive of the adoption. Most families saw no need for continued agency services, though transracial and single-parent families were more likely to express a wish for continued help.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews were conducted with ten families who moved out of state. Interviews were planned mainly on weekends or in evenings so that both parents, when appropriate, could participate through the use of extension phones. It was the interviewer's impression that for most families the telephone was not an obstacle to comfortable and candid discussion. Several parents commented they had enjoyed the interview.

Family situation

Of ten families interviewed were three traditional adoptive families, six transracial families and one single parent. One black couple was separated, but reconciliation was being considered. Families in this group tended to be slightly larger than the group of families interviewed in person; traditional adoptive families had a median of two children, and the transracial families had a median of four children. The child in the single parent home was an only child. Six families had biological children as well as adopted children.

Common to all of these families were moves and job changes. Some had more than one move or job change before becoming settled in their present living and work situations. All but two families described the move as difficult at the time; for the two exceptional families the move represented a "return home" to family or friends. A few also noted difficulty associated with changes in employment. Difficulty was particularly acute for those families who had more than one job change or in situations in which a change of career or job was accompanied by a decrease in income.

In addition to moves and job changes six families grew in size through adoption and birth. Four children were adopted, three by transracial families and one by a traditional adoptive family. Two traditional adoptive families had biologic children; one family had one child and another had two biologic children since the adoption.

Crises also were common with seven families having undergone at least one major crisis. Four families went through a period of considerable difficulty following the death (three families) or illness (one family) of a grandparent. Another family recalled stress over an extended period of unemployment of the adoptive father and another as a result of the adoptive parents' separation. In the remaining family the adoptive mother suffered severe injuries as a robbery victim. This woman also has a serious illness which requires periodic lengthy hospitalizations.

The children placed and current adjustment

Of the ten children six were four months or younger at adoptive placement, another three children were eight or nine months and the remaining child was four years old at placement.[1] For the most part this too was a healthy group of children. However, two children have had repeated illnesses since infancy. One child has had a history of ear infections, particularly acute

[1] This 4-year-old child was included in the sample, though older, due to error in the original sample selection and the family's subsequent interest in being part of the study.

in the first 2 years, which may have resulted in hearing loss. At five years this child then began developing bladder infections. The second child was hospitalized at four months for bronchial pneumonia and has had recurring bouts with bronchitis until five years of age. This child was also hospitalized for a double hernia and has had developmental problems probably resulting from a premature birth.

Two other children have had minor problems. One child has had speech problems for which speech therapy is being given. The other child was hospitalized overnight for minor surgery, although the experience was quite traumatic for the child.

Adoption has been freely discussed in all but one of these families. The exceptional family is waiting until the child is older before explaining about adoption. Like the larger group of families, several parents wished they had more facts about their children's biologic parents with a particular desire for more information on the children's health histories.

For six families problems with the children have been few or minor. The children appear to be making good progress and parents are reasonably satisfied. The other four children have serious problems. Three of these children are overactive and have problems with control and aggression. The other child has had health problems and developmental problems although improvements are evident. Two of the children were older when placed in adoption and both had poor pre-adoptive experiences. Parents were concerned and a few had sought outside help for the special needs of their children.

Summary

The small group of ten families interviewed by telephone looked slightly different from the larger sample of families. They tended to have more children, more changes and more crises in the years since the children were placed. Four families received older children, two of whom had poor pre-adoptive care; another child was at risk due to prenatal difficulties. At the second interview with families, this group also had more children with serious problems.

Of interest is the fact that six families suggested ways in which the agency service could have been improved; four mentioned follow-up supportive services after adoption would have been helpful. Two families considered

the research study to be an expression of the agency's continuing interest in them. One couple movingly stated "it is good to feel we are not alone."

SUMMARY

This is the second report in a series describing the lives of black adopted children and their families as the children grow up. At the time of this report the children were about four years old.

The children were adopted when less than two years of age; three-quarters were adopted when less than six months. Thirty-one children were adopted by single parents, forty-two by white couples, and forty-five by black couples. In the years since adoption contact with families has been maintained through an annual Christmas card and a mid-summer newsletter, each containing a card to be returned with any change of address. The families have been cooperative and enthusiastic about the study. This report includes data from interviews with twenty-seven single parent families, thirty-six transracial families, and thirty-six traditional adoptive families. (Extensive telephone interviews were held with another ten families.) Ninety-two percent of the original sample is thus included in this report. The greatest sample attrition has been among the traditional adoptive families.

At age four nearly all the children were found to be healthy and developing normally. Handicaps were few and minor. A few children had difficulties with chronic illness; seventeen children had been hospitalized; however, these illnesses and hospitalizations seemed within the range of experiences common to many young children.

The families have remained basically stable. Changes have been those common to most young families in the process of advancing career and income potential and of completing their families. Seventy-eight percent of the transracial families have moved at least once, as have only about one-third of the other families. Three-quarters of all families owned their own homes. Traditional adoptive and transracial families had similar incomes, but in the former both parents were working while mothers in transracial families tended to remain at home. Incomes of single parents were low--

nearly half were earning less than $10,000 in 1976--and this low income has been a continuing source of difficulty for this group.

Children have been added to these families in the years since the first research contact was made shortly after adoptive placement. Fifteen children have been born, one to a single parent, eight to white couples, and six to black couples. Twelve children have been adopted, two by single parents, seven by white couples, and three by black couples. The transracial families are large; all but one have more than one child, and two have seven children.

In interaction with the community, the transracial families seemed the most active. Single-parent families were the most isolated, one-third of the single mothers stating that they had no close friendships. For both traditional and single-parent adoptive families the extended family seemed to be an important source of support and activity, while transracial families tended to be both geographically and emotionally more distant from the extended family.

The primary caretaker of these children was usually the mother, though two-thirds of the fathers seemed to be greatly involved in being parents. Three-quarters of the children of traditional and single-parent adoption are, at age four, in full-day nursery school, while 60 percent of the transracial adoptive children are in nursery school, usually for a half day. For all but nine children (all children of working mothers) care has been considered consistently good, with child care plans having been very stable.

Considering the entire sample, 13 percent of the children were judged to show serious emotional or developmental problems in a series of assessments of overall adjustment. This is a slightly lower proportion than has been found in other studies of adoption. However, there were differences among the adoptive groups, with one-quarter of single parents' children seen as having serious disturbance. However, many children in this adoptive group were placed at an older age than children in the other two groups, a number having had multiple placements and poor care prior to adoption. Thus having a single parent is only one variable in an interaction of circumstances that may be associated with difficulties in adjustment.

Parental characteristics associated with the child's adjustment centered around a complex of ratings involving attitudes toward being a parent and communication among family members. The mother's involvement in caretaking, defined as assumption of responsibility, not time spent, seemed the

most important parental characteristic associated with good adjustment of the child. Attitudes toward adoption and early experiences soon after the adoptive placement were not associated with the child's current adjustment. Given the major role that a mother plays in the life of a very young child, these findings seem to make sense.

Of the thirteen children displaying serious developmental difficulties or symptomatic behavior at the first research contact, six continued to have problems at age four. Five of these children were found to be seriously troubled. Numbers were small, but there were indications that children placed as young infants made a better recovery from early difficulties than did older children.

It was hypothesized, following the postulates of psychoanalytically-based theory, that children of single parents would encounter more difficulty forming sexual identity than would children in two-parent families and that these problems would be evident by age four. No evidence to substantiate this hypothesis was found. On the basis of careful clinical judgments and test materials, only five children from the entire sample were found to be having any noteworthy problems. Girls showed more distinct patterns of preference for girls at this age than did boys, and boys had a more distinct preference for traditionally masculine toys, but there were no differences associated with single-parent adoption. Children of single parents tended to have both adult and child friends of the opposite sex, as well as nursery school experience. In flexibility of family role assignments, in attitudes and expectations, and in freedom to talk about sexual matters, it was in the transracial families that differences were noted.

It was also hypothesized that the transracial adoptive children would exhibit more problems in developing identity as a black person than would children with black parents, and that problems with identity formation would be evident by age four. Eighty percent of children in the entire sample and 94 percent of the transracial adoptive children were accurate in awareness of black and white races. On some measures transracial adoptive children displayed higher black preference scores than did children in the other two groups; this was not sustained throughout other measures of racial preference on which all three groups looked similar. Seventy percent of the transracial adoptive children identify themselves as black, as do only 50 percent of the other children. These differences are not dramatic, but the consistent pattern of a higher proportion of black awareness, preference, and identity among the transracial adoptive children must be noted. Certainly there is no evidence that these children are doing less well in mastering these early concepts because they are in white homes.

Contrary to speculation, the presence of black companions, exposure to black culture, residence in a black or mixed neighborhood, and racial attitudes and plans of parents were not related to the child's developing concept of self as black. The light-skinned children did tend to identify themselves as white, and since a high proportion of the light-skinned children were in transracial homes, the degree of black identity found in these children takes on added significance.

Adoption was not of much concern to children of this age; most families have mentioned adoption, but children have asked few questions. Transracial families seemed most comfortable with discussion of adoption. Except for those of transracial adoptive families, extended families have been enthusiastic about the adoption and have welcomed the child. Approximately half of the transracial adoptive couples have extended families who remain dubious about the adoption. Transracial and single-parent families expressed a wish for continued service by the agency in higher proportion than did traditional adoptive families, but most families saw no need for continued services of any type.

In summary then, this is a group of children and families who are functioning well in their varied worlds. The children are still young, it will be important to see if more problems or different kinds of problems evolve as the children begin to interact more with the community.

The ten out-of-state families interviewed by telephone looked slightly different from the families interviewed in person. The families tended to be larger and a higher proportion of older, potentially more difficult adoptive children were found among this group. They also have encountered more changes, crises, and more problems with their children. These differences may be explained in part by the fact that the children were older at the point of the second interview. Most were between five and six years, rather than 3-1/2 to 4 years, when their parents were interviewed, thus increasing the life experiences of the families by about two years. The parents were more vocal in suggesting ways in which agency adoptive services might be improved, awareness made more acute, perhaps, because of the many disruptions in their lives. Increased agency support was particularly desired.

CONCLUSIONS

The data suggest that children in transracial adoption are, in these early years, forming a positive concept of blackness, and of themselves as black persons. These findings support those of other recent studies and have implications with respect to use of white homes for black children. First, the findings suggest that transracial adoption may not be so destructive to the child's ability to cope with a sometimes hostile world as some writers have feared. These homes have provided many advantages for their children--a constant supportive affectional base, encouragement of education and intellectual development, and a pattern of stable and successful family life. The children have developed positive feelings about themselves as black; perhaps this self-concept will be firm enough that the children can withstand the racism they meet, even though their parents cannot teach them techniques to cope with racism from personal experience. This will be examined in subsequent research contacts as the children grow older and begin to meet the world.

Second, the role of transracial adoption in the larger society must be considered. Though the demise of racism may be further in the future than many white writers, and many transracial adoptive parents,would like to think, surely it remains a goal for society. If these children have a "core" concept of themselves as black persons which is positive enough to gird them against the racism they meet, perhaps they will serve as a bridge between two cultures and thus, in a very positive way, contribute to the world of the future.

With respect to children adopted by single parents, the data indicated that the task of appropriate sexual identity was being accomplished within normal limits. A higher proportion were, however, evidencing some disturbance in other age appropriate developmental tasks. Whether this can be attributed to the single-parent status of their parents is dubious, however. It must not be forgotten that these parents adopted a group of troubled children. Because they thought that providing substitute care for small infants during working hours would be difficult, single parents adopted older infants and toddlers, many of whom had already experienced multiple placements and poor care. Despite stress--primarily resulting from low income--single parents have provided very stable homes for these children with good care

and a close and nurturing relationship. Without this stability and nurture, it is difficult to imagine what problems the children might have had.

Common sense suggests that it is very difficult for a single parent to raise a child. As the children grow older, the stress associated with the daily meshing of child care and work responsibilities should lessen. At the same time, the striving for independence of the school age child may be disruptive to the close parent-child relationship formed in many of these homes. Problems may increase, or may lessen, as the children grow; it will be an interesting group of families to follow.

It will always be difficult to assess "success" in this group of adoptions, due to the stressful early months of these children. Moreover, a few single parents have been unable to provide the necessary conditions for their child's development, and without a second parent to counterbalance personal deficits in one parent, serious problems may arise. For the most part, however, these have been good homes for children. Certainly the data suggest that single parents should continue to be considered as a resource for children needing homes. For some, adoption subsidies would prove most helpful.

Finally, considering all the children in the sample, it must be concluded that in general adoption has been a positive solution. Whatever their individual failings, all of these homes have provided financial security, the stability of concerned and interested parents, and the basic requirements for growth and development. A high proportion of the children are doing very well. The question of "who am I" described by theorists as one that all adopted children must face, is certainly not evident yet, as these children pass through that stage of development in which the basic building blocks of self-identityare laid down.

This paper is the second in a series of reports which will follow these families through the growth of the children. It is only through continuing assessment of the impact of these alternative families on the growth of their children that it can be discovered whether these are appropriate ways to plan for children. The overall early picture is of strong families and healthy children.

APPENDIX

Reliability of items referred to in the text

Reliability is reported as percentage agreement of two independent judgments on the categories of the item reported in the text.

Item		Percentage Agreement
Parental assessment of child care plans		74
Interviewer assessment of child care plans		62
Flexibility in family role assignment		65
Clarity in definition of family roles		60
Involvement in parenting -	Husband	82
	Wife	63
Child's ability to handle closeness to and emotional distance from parents		100
Child's capacity for dependence and independence		80
Child's ability to handle aggression		80
Evidence of fear or anxiety in child		100
Evidence of appropriate sexual identity - child		100
Parental capacity to meet child's needs for dependence and independence appropriately		
	Single parents	50
	All groups	61
Communication -	Mother/child	72
	Marital relationship	92
	Overall	72
Individualization of child		73
Emotional support provided child		72
Comfort with parenting		82
Parental affect displayed immediately following placement - "Positive, Negative"		97
Sensitivity to child's needs shortly after placement -		
	Single parents	77

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Chicago Child Care Society

5467 South University Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60615
(312) 643-0452

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